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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. WEBSTER).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
December 12, 2012.

I hereby appoint the Honorable DANIEL WEBSTER to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

JOHN BOEHNER,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 17, 2012, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes each, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

GUN VIOLENCE ECLIPSES FISCAL CLIFF DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. It's difficult to focus on the task at hand in the aftermath of a shooting rampage in my district yesterday. With at least 10,000 people in a shopping mall, a young man allegedly, say some eyewitnesses, in body armor, and armed with a semi-automatic weapon discharged 60 or more shots. There were two people killed and a young 15-year-old girl seriously wounded.

Mr. Speaker, one is haunted by these events. We had one in Aurora, Colorado, at the theater where there were 12 people killed, 60 wounded; six people killed at the Sikh temple this summer; and the day spa in Milwaukee, where three women were killed before the shooter turned the gun on himself. We had a horrific episode earlier in my congressional career in Springfield, Oregon.

It is hard to have meaningful conversations on a variety of subjects. I was going to deal with that problem with the fiscal cliff today, but gun violence is another area in America where it seems we can't have a discussion without delusional claims of overreach and taking away hunting rifles. Congress won't even allow statistics on gun violence to be gathered, and we certainly have made no progress towards closing the gun show loophole.

Yet I come today, in the aftermath of this tragedy, with a small ray of hope. When nearly half of all military suicides are committed with privately owned weapons, the Pentagon and Congress are moving towards establishing policies to separate at-risk servicemembers from personal private weapons. Congress is poised to enact legislation to end a prohibition about the military collecting information about firearms kept at home. These are simple, commonsense steps for an armed services where more military personnel take their own life than who die in battle.

Perhaps if we can take these reasonable steps to protect our servicemen and their families, perhaps we can develop the courage to treat the epidemic of gun violence with the same thoughtful, small steps when it comes to protecting the rest of our families. Until then, we will mourn the victims and thank God that our families were not at that mall.

AFGHANISTAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, in this very chaotic time for the House of Representatives and for the American people, we need to remain focused on the fact that our young men and women are still dying in Afghanistan. Our involvement in Afghanistan has become a confused strategy at best.

Mr. Speaker, I will submit a news article for the RECORD. The title of this article is: Afghan peace plan gives U.S. smaller role. With it, Mr. Speaker, I would like to submit 12 names of American servicepeople killed recently.

Mr. Speaker, it is time for Congress to listen to the American people and start acting on their wishes. Poll after poll shows that they want to get out of Afghanistan now, they want our troops home, they want to stop seeing our young men and women dying, and the American people want the \$10 billion a month being spent in Afghanistan to be spent here in America to help all our economic problems. I do not understand why we in Congress seem to be without debate about this problem in Afghanistan.

We are currently in the process of a bilateral security agreement that will keep our troops in Afghanistan for 10 years after 2014. Where is the outrage by Congress? We are financially broke. We complain all the time about we can't reach this deal or that deal, we're going over the cliff, and yet our troops are dying in Afghanistan and we're spending money we don't have.

Mr. Speaker, the article states:

The Afghan Government is pursuing a peace initiative in which Pakistan would replace the United States in arranging talks between the warring sides and the Taliban would be granted government posts that effectively could cede to them political control of the southern and the eastern strongholds.

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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